



## Military Matters: Defense Intelligence Agency Honors 40 for Bravery

By Steve Vogel, Washington Post, February 21, 2002 (pg. VA5)

Work done by the Defense Intelligence Agency is by its nature secretive and usually draws little public notice.

This low profile has left many Americans unaware of DIA's losses in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. The agency lost seven employees when a hijacked American Airlines jet slammed into the Pentagon. Even less known are the heroics performed that day by many DIA employees.

Forty of these workers were honored last month at an awards ceremony at Bolling Air Force Base in the District, where the agency's Defense Intelligence Analysis Center is based.

"Like many other Americans, those we honor on this occasion never set out to become heroes," said Vice Adm. Thomas R. Wilson, who presided over the ceremony. "They would have greatly preferred if the events of 11 September had never happened. But they did happen, and when duty called, these individuals and organizations answered that call."

Paul E. Gonzales, deputy comptroller for program and budget, was awarded the director's award for exceptional civilian service, the highest award that the DIA director may bestow on a civilian.

Disregarding his critical injuries when his office was hit by the aircraft, according to the citation, Gonzales removed flaming debris from an injured colleague, started a roll call to identify survivors and then searched for a way to exit the burning office. After finding a way out, he helped to guide four colleagues to safety.

Dagoberto Cordova, a DIA contractor from Lorton, received the DIA Award for Humanitarian Service. He reentered the building and crawled through holes in the walls, finding a woman whose face was blackened by smoke and helping her out of the building to medical treatment.

Cordova's hands were burned, and the smoke was becoming worse. He removed his shirt, dipped it in water and wrapped it over his nose and mouth. He reentered the building and found himself standing in water while surrounded by live, severed electrical wires.

"No one will ever know just how many lives were saved as the direct result of his brave acts on Sept. 11," the citation read.

The DIA Award for Humanitarian Service was also presented to 10 other workers:

Aaron N. Cooper, Clarence L. Habegger, Lantz M. Hokanson and Lawrence D. Mangin used fire extinguishers to clear a passage out of the wreckage in the Office of the Comptroller and risked their lives to help ensure rescue and treatment of five injured co-workers.

Air Force Lt. Col. Daniel E. Hooton Jr., of Waldorf, suffered injuries to his head, legs and lungs but helped a badly wounded employee and her child to escape the fire in the outside ring of the Pentagon.

Air Force Staff Sgt. Mark McNeil, Navy Lt. Todd C. Dudley, Army Lt. Col. Robert E. Everson and Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Khary D. Stringer assisted in rescue efforts. Air Force Staff Sgt. Richard S. Cooley helped to treat wounded personnel and searched passageways for survivors.

Hooton also received the Purple Heart, and seven more employees received the Defense of Freedom Medal, its civilian equivalent. They were Cooper, Gonzales, Hokanson, Kathy A. Cordero, David W. Lanagan, Christine I. Morrison and Patricia Pague.

The Defense Intelligence Director's Award was given to 21 employees in recognition of their work in supporting families of the seven DIA workers killed. Among them is Frederick G. Wong, chief of the DIA Office for Human Resources, who directed the agency's casualty and family assistance response.

"By their actions and in their spirit, these heroes reflect the overall determination of the people of our agency to bear whatever burden is necessary to achieve victory in the current conflict," Wilson said.

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